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#12

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JENKINS

JONES

PALMIOTTI

The Bugle

LATE EDITION

60 cents

DAY, MARCH 11, 1999

c Four Save City

Luke Cage Eyes Run for Governors Mansion

Long Lines of P...

60 YEARS OF SUPER HEROES

IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT.

THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD'VE KNOWN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN.

YOU WERE JUST TRYING TO DO YOUR BEST.

IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT.

IT WASN'T YOUR *FAULT*.

IT ALL SEEMED PRETTY *ROUTINE* AT THE TIME. WACKO SUPER VILLAIN HATCHES NEFARIOUS PLOT, SITUATION GETS UGLY, SPIDEY SWINGS IN AT THE LAST MOMENT TO SAVE THE *DAY*.

VILLAIN IN QUESTION: THE *CHAMELEON*-- MASTER OF DISGUISE, ERSTWHILE SOVIET SPY... BIT OF A *LIGHTWEIGHT*, TO BE HONEST.

UGLY SITUATION INVOLVED THE KIDNAPPING OF YOUR *WIFE*.

ONLY THERE, THINGS GOT A BIT *COMPLICATED*. 'CAUSE WHEN YOU SWUNG INTO ACTION, YOU DISCOVERED CHAMELEON HADN'T COME TO HURT YOU, OR TO EXACT ANY DEVILISH REVENGE.

HE WAS JUST SOME POOR, CONFUSED MOOK, TRYING TO GET YOUR *ATTENTION*. HE WAS RAMBLING, INCOHERENT... *UNPREDICTABLE*...

WHAMMO.

I *LOVE* YOU, PETER.

HE TOLD YOU THAT HE *LOVED* YOU-- HE DIDN'T REALLY MEAN IT TO SOUND THE WAY IT DID. IT WAS JUST HIS CRUDE, CLUELESS ATTEMPT TO REACH OUT TO SOMEONE-- *ANYONE*. AND YOU TREATED HIM LIKE SOME KIND OF *CHUMP*.

YOU LAUGHED AT HIM. HE LAUGHED TOO. IT WAS REAL FUNNY FOR A MOMENT, THE BOTH OF YOU CRACKING UP LIKE THAT.

SUPER HERO AND VILLAIN, YUKKING IT UP ON A ROOFTOP. YOU FIGURED THAT'D PUT AN *END* TO IT. BUT INSTEAD, IT MADE THINGS *WORSE*.

ULTIMATELY, *YOU'RE* THE ONE WHO SENT HIM OVER THE *EDGE*.

STAN LEE Presents

PERCHANCE TO DREAM...

HOW WERE *YOU* TO KNOW? IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT--IT WAS *HIM*.

YOU DIDN'T KILL HIM--HE KILLED *HIMSELF*. YOU JUST HAVE TO KEEP TELLING YOURSELF THAT.

AND MAYBE YOU'LL EVENTUALLY *BELIEVE* IT.

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FIRE DOOR

YOU COME DOWN *SLOWLY*, ONE STEP AT A TIME. MAYBE IT'S YOUR MIND PLAYING TRICKS, BUT YOU IMAGINE YOU HEAR A SOUND AHEAD:

TICK. TICK. TICK

NOT THAT YOU'D EVER *ADMIT* IT, PETE, BUT THAT'S THE CLOCK TICKING ON YOUR CRIMINAL SOUL.

IT'S THAT OH-SO-ELEGANT TIMEPIECE ON THE VAST EXPANSE OF YOUR PERFECTLY EMPTY APARTMENT WALL.
TICK. TICK. TICK

PLACE IS DEATHLY QUIET... SMELL OF COOKING... NO MARY JANE, AS USUAL. THIS ISN'T YOUR HOME, IT'S A *PRISON*.

TICK. "IT'S 6P.M."
TICK. "DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR WIFE IS?"
TICK.

OH, PETER, *LOOK* AT YOU-- YOU'RE SOPPING *WET!* IS IT RAINING OUTSIDE?

TICK. TICK. TICK

I CAN'T SAY I *NOTICED,* AUNT MAY--

THAT'LL *DO,* MISTER SMART ALEC. YOU KNOW, THAT WIT OF YOURS WILL BE THE *DEATH* OF ME ONE DAY, YOU MARK MY WORDS.

POOR OLD DEAR... SHE'S TRYING SO HARD TO MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER. BUT THE FORCED SMILE IS JUST HER WAY OF PRETENDING SHE ISN'T WORRIED.

HER URGENCY JUST MAKES YOU FEEL EVEN MORE *ALONE.*

I THOUGHT YOU'D BE HOME LATER, SO I JUST THIS MINUTE GOT STARTED ON DINNER. IT'S--

"--MY *FAVORITE,"* SURE, AUNT MAY.

I JUST NEED A FEW MINUTES TO FRESHEN UP, OKAY?

TICK.

THAT'S *FINE*, DEAR-- IT WON'T BE READY FOR ANOTHER HALF HOUR. JUST MAKE SURE YOU--

--OH...

SLEEP TAKES YOU, LIKE A SPIDER TAKES A FLY. TICK. TICK.

TICK.

THAT'S THE SOUND OF TIME, SLOWING DOWN.

Hh--?

MMF-HHH... HMMF!

PANIC SETS IN. YOU'RE SUDDENLY TRAPPED IN A WEB OF YOUR OWN *MAKING*.

SOMEONE'S HERE. AREN'T THEY SUPPOSED TO *HELP* YOU SOMEHOW?

WHY DON'T THEY COME AND *FREE* YOU?

SHKUPP

LOOK OUT SON LOOK OUT!

LET ME--- UNHHHHHHH!

CAPTAIN STACY!

MAYBE THEY JUST *CAN'T*-- MAYBE *NO ONE* CAN FREE YOU FROM THE *GUILT* THAT WEIGHS SO HEAVILY ON YOUR SOUL.

IN THE DREAM NOW, TIME STANDS STILL. IT'S *COLD.*

NO...

YOU HEAR A FAMILIAR SOUND THAT REMINDS YOU OF A FAR-AWAY *PLACE*...

KTOW

...AND SUDDENLY, YOU'RE *BACK* THERE...

SK

AAAH

...IN THE THROES OF IMMINENT *DEFEAT.*

YOU HEAR CAPTAIN STACY DOWN BELOW, TRYING TO CLEAR THE CROWD. TRYING TO PROTECT INNOCENTS FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS.

THE PIECES ARE FALLING *BELOW!*

BUT-- IF ANYONE SHOULD BE *HIT--!!*

THERE'S A WEIRD SOUND... IT'S LIKE BLOOD RUSHING IN YOUR EARS. ALL THE ADRENALINE GOES TO YOUR FINGERTIPS...

...HE WAS LIKE A ***FATHER*** TO YOU...

CAPTAIN STACY!

AND *THAT*... THAT'S THE SOUND OF YOUR WORLD, CAVING IN.

HANG ON, CAPTAIN... *HANG ON!* I'LL HAVE YOU THERE IN *SECONDS!*

NO, MY BOY... IT'S... HOPELESS! I BEG YOU... *STOP!* LET ME DOWN! YOU *MUST!* I HAVE TO *TALK* TO YOU... AND THERE'S SO LITTLE... TIME!

WHAT *IS* IT, CAPTAIN? I'M-- LISTEN-ING!

IT-- IT'S *GWEN!* AFTER I'M-- GONE --THERE'LL BE NO ONE-- TO LOOK *AFTER* HER--

NO ONE, PETER --EXCEPT-- *YOU!*

HE DIED IN YOUR ARMS, PETE-- IT WAS ALL BECAUSE OF YOU. AND EVEN AS HE SLIPPED AWAY, YOU HAD THE AUDACITY TO MAKE HIM A PROMISE YOU COULDN'T KEEP.

BUT, WHAT IF SHE EVER *LEARNS*--

--THAT YOU *DIED*-- BECAUSE OF--*ME?*

I'LL *LOVE* GWEN-- AND *CHERISH* HER-- AS LONG AS I LIVE!

REST EASY, SIR-- REST EASY...

YOU PROMISED HIM-- YOU *PROMISED!*

YOU SAID YOU'D PROTECT GWEN... SAID YOU'D LOOK AFTER HER *FOREVER.*

BUT PROMISES ARE LIKE *HEARTS,* RIGHT?

MADE TO BE BROKEN.

NNNHH--!

IT WASN'T YOUR *FAULT*... WHY WON'T ANYONE UNDERSTAND? YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING. YOU'RE NOT *GOD*.

EVERYONE DIES.

ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY GET CLOSE TO *YOU*.

SOMEWHERE, THERE'S A WHISPER. IT'S HARRY, TRYING TO ***FORGIVE*** YOU AS HE DIES RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR EYES.

ELSEWHERE, A SINGLE SHOT RINGS OUT. KRAVEN THE HUNTER GOES OUT WITH A BANG.

They said my mother was insane.

SPUT SPUT

CRUCIFIED, NOT ON A CROSS OF GOLD--

THE GOBLIN GOES OUT LIKE HE CAME *IN*-- IN A MESS OF BLOOD AND TEARS.

MJ?

YOU HEAR YOUR WIFE'S HEARTBEAT, WHERE THERE HAD BEEN TWO BEFORE. SHE THINKS SHE'S ***FAILED*** YOU.

NO. NO. NO.

ALL AROUND YOU, LIFE--FRAGILE AND EXQUISITE AND INEXPRESSIBLE-- CRUMBLES INTO ***DUST***.

...THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING, OSBORN WAS TELLING THE TRUTH...

ALL BECAUSE OF *YOU*, PETE. YOU STILL SAY IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT?

IT ALWAYS *WAS.*

BUT GET READY, BECAUSE IT'S COMING-- SOMETHING *BIG*...

N-NO...! NOT THAT! I DON'T WANT TO SEE *THAT!*

I *WON'T!*

I WON'T...

NO! I WON'T LOOK! YOU CAN'T... *MAKE* ME--!

CAN'T STOP IT, PETE. TRY AS YOU MIGHT, IT'S ALWAYS THERE, RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR MIND'S EYE.

YOU ATTEMPT TO LOOK AWAY, BUT AS YOU TURN YOUR HEAD, A COLD BREEZE COMES IN FROM NOWHERE...

...AND SUDDENLY, YOU'RE BACK ON THAT WINDY BRIDGE.

GWEN?

I SAVED YOU...

FOR YOU, FRIEND-- WILL COME

HER!

GR

BE DEAD!

YOU HEAR HIM COMING, LIKE MOLASSES. BEHIND YOU.

A MILLION TIMES, YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS SCENARIO IN YOUR DREAMS. EACH TIME, YOU RELIVE THE *PANIC* OF THE MOMENT.

HE CATCHES HER HARD... POOR LITTLE GWENDY-- LIKE SHE EVER HAD A CHANCE AGAINST THAT SUPERCHARGED FREAK.

YOU'RE POWERLESS TO STOP IT.

GWEN!

NO!

LIKE A MILLION TIMES BEFORE, YOU MAKE A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SAVE HER BEFORE SHE'S LOST FROM SIGHT IN THE MURKY WATERS BELOW.

THWIP

HER LIFE FLASHES BEFORE YOUR EYES.

DID IT!

SWIK!

SNAP!

AND THEN, THAT MOMENT OF NOT KNOWING-- THE MOMENT THAT'LL HAUNT YOUR DREAMS AGAIN AND AGAIN, FOREVER AND EVER. UNTIL THE DAY YOU DIE.

YOU MAKE THE OBLIGATORY SPIDEY WISECRACK AS YOU HAUL HER TO SAFETY. YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENED.

NONONO

I *SAVED* YOU, HONEY...DON'T YOU *SEE?*

HEY, KID--WHAT'S *WRONG?* DON'T YOU *UNDERSTAND?*

I *SAVED* YOU--

--YOU *CAN'T* BE--

EVERY TIME YOU HAVE THE DREAM, IT ALWAYS ENDS THE SAME. GWEN ALWAYS FALLS, AND YOU ALWAYS RACE TO SAVE HER.

YOU ALWAYS COME IN *SECOND.*

JUST LIKE ALWAYS. MAYBE IF YOU'D NEVER GOTTEN *INVOLVED.*

I *SAVED* YOU, HONEY...DON'T YOU *SEE?*

I SAVED YOU...

MAYBE IF YOU'D LET HER *FALL,* LET HER TAKE HER CHANCES IN THE WATER.

IT'S THE TERRIBLE BURDEN YOU'VE BEEN LIVING WITH ALL THESE YEARS--THE ONE THAT'S THREATENED TO PULL YOU UNDER SO MANY NIGHTS.

MAYBE YOU KILLED HER.

NO! OH, NO, NO, NO--

DON'T BE DEAD, GWEN-- I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE DEAD!

THEY'RE BECOMING *CLEARER* NOW-- THESE SILENT WITNESSES TO YOUR MEMORIES OF FAILURE.

YOU NEED TO GO TO THEM, TO FIND *COMFORT*. IF YOU CAN JUST *GO* TO THEM, EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY, THE WAY IT *SHOULD* BE.

BUT FIRST, THERE'S ONE MORE INCIDENT THAT WEIGHS SO HEAVILY ON YOUR HEART.

FACE IT, PETE.

SHRIP

A-A SPIDER! I-- BUT, SO? WHY IS IT-- WHY IS IT THAT WAY??

SPIDER-MAN!

LIKE COSTUMED HEROES? CONFIDENTIALLY, WE IN THE COMIC MAG BUSINESS REFER TO THEM AS "LONG UNDERWEAR CHARACTERS"! AND, AS YOU KNOW, THEY'RE A DIME A DOZEN! BUT, WE THINK YOU MAY FIND OUR SPIDER-MAN JUST A BIT... DIFFERENT!

SAY GANG WE NEED ONE MORE GUY FOR THE DANCE! HOW ABOUT PETER PARKER OVER THERE?

ARE YOU KIDDIN'? THAT BOOKWORM WOULDN'T KNOW A CHA-CHA FROM A WALTZ!

PETER PARKER? HE'S MIDTOWN HIGH'S ONLY PROFESSIONAL WALLFLOWER!

STAN LEE and S. DITKO

ACCIDENTALLY ABS... TIC AMOUNT OF R... DYING INSECT, IN... BITES THE NEARE... AT THE SPLIT SEC... EBBS FROM ITS R...

STOP, THIEF! STO... IF HE MAKES ...E ELEVATOR, ...L GET AWAY!

IT'S WHAT MAKES YOU WHO YOU *ARE*...

IT'S THE FUGITIVE WHO RAN PAST ME! I DIDN'T STOP WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE!

THAT- THAT- THAT'S-- OH NO! IT CAN'T BE!

OUT IN THE KITCHEN, A WARM SMELL OF COOKING. IT VAULTS YOU BACK TO CHILDHOOD-- A SAFER, LESS *CLUTTERED* TIME.

AUNT MAY'S PREPARING YOUR *FAVORITE*.

SEEMS LIKE EVERYTHING SHE EVER MAKES IS "YOUR FAVORITE". HER MEAT LOAF IS NOT THE BEST. YOU NEVER HAD THE HEART TO *TELL* HER.

SEPTEMBER

ALTHOUGH I MUST ADMIT I *DO* FEEL SO MUCH BETTER LATELY, DEAR! MOSTLY BECAUSE YOU AND MRS. WATSON TOOK SUCH GOOD CARE OF ME WHILE I WAS ILL!

NATURALLY! I COULDN'T TAKE A CHANCE OF EVER HAVING TO EAT SOME-ONE *ELSE'S* PANCAKES!

BECAUSE IT ALWAYS SEEMS WORTH THE *EATING*. THE TASTE OF IT ALWAYS TRANSPORTS YOU.

BACK TO *INNOCENCE*-- TO WHEN YOU WERE A SKINNY LITTLE GEEK WITH GLASSES.

BACK TO WHEN YOU STILL HAD UNCLE BEN.

THE MEMORIES OF THAT TIME ARE SIMPLE, LIKE A COMIC BOOK.

INFANCY... HIGH SCHOOL... COLLEGE DAYS... A SCIENCE LAB...

A SPIDER BITE. A RUSH OF UNIMAGINABLE ENERGY. AUNT MAY. UNCLE BEN.

PETER PARKER, SPIDER-MAN.

LIVE ON STAGE

A MAN RUNS PAST YOU. DESPITE YOUR NEWFOUND POWERS, YOU DO NOTHING TO STOP HIM.

AND, ONE EVENING AS PETER PARKER RETURNS HOME FROM A PERSONAL APPEARANCE...

A POLICE CAR! IN FRONT OF OUR HOUSE! WHAT CAN BE WRONG??

UNCLE BEN, LYING ON THE STAIRS LIKE A DISCARDED MARIONETTE. HE WOULDN'T HAVE HARMED A *FLY*.

HUH?? *WHAT THE-- ???*

SURPRISED TO SEE ME?

YOU TRACK THE KILLER DOWN TO A WAREHOUSE.

IT'S THE SAME GUY YOU LET ESCAPE THE WEEK BEFORE.

AND THEN, THERE WERE *TWO*. JUST YOU, AND YOUR LOVING, *TRUSTING* AUNT.

YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD TO HELP HER THROUGH IT. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY YOU COULD SHOVE ALL THAT GUILT ASIDE.

I... I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO, AUNT MAY. HOW WAS I TO *KNOW...?*

YOU CAN'T REMEMBER HOW MANY TIMES YOU CAUGHT HER CRYING FOR THE HUSBAND WHO'D BEEN TAKEN FROM HER. BUT YOU COULD NEVER *SAY* ANYTHING.

YOU WANTED TO CRY TOO, AND COMFORT HER, AND TELL HER IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT.

AND THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A *LIE*.

HE DIED BECAUSE YOU WERE TOO SELFISH AND LAZY TO PREVENT IT. IT WAS YOUR FAULT, PETE.

AND AS SOON AS YOU ACCEPT IT, THAT'S WHEN YOU'LL BE FREE OF IT.

IT'S ALL BECOME CLEAR NOW. YOU CAN GO TO THEM. YOU'VE PAID THE PRICE.

GO TO THEM.

COME ON, THEN. COME AN' *GET* IT.

YES... THIS IS WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR--IT'S WHAT YOU *DESERVE*.

YOU'VE SNEERED AT MY PROWESS FOR THE *LAST TIME*, SPIDER-MAN!!

DON'T *BET* ON IT! YOU MISSED ME AGAIN!!

IT'S YOUR DREAM OF A SIMPLER TIME.

AN EASIER, UNCLUTTERED TIME.

UGH! NEVER *FELT* A PUNCH LIKE THAT BEFORE!! I'M REACTING LIKE ANY ORDINARY TEEN-AGER!!!

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO *DO*-- FRUSTRATE ME??? FIGHT BACK, DO YOU HEAR!! DON'T WATER DOWN MY VICTORY BY MAKING IT TOO EASY!

THAT BLASTED WEB! IT'S SPREAD OUT OVER MY GLASSES! I...I CAN'T SEE! CAN'T GET IT OFF!

I CAN NO LONGER SEE THE OTHER ARMS ARE NOW PULLING ME AROUND ME-- I'M WITH INCREDIBLE STRENGTH!

THIS IS WHERE YOU REALLY WANT TO BE.

SPIDER-MAN!!

YOU'VE GOT THAT BACKWARDS, LOUD-MOUTH! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S GOT A LOT TO LEARN!

WOW--EEEE! THIS SIRE HAS OUTDONE HIS OUTDID BEST ALL HOLLOW!!

HOLD IT, FELLA! I'M ABOUT TO GIVE A GUY A LIFT!

LATER!

HAW! IS THAT THE BEST YOU GUYS GOT? WHAT A BUNCHA MAROONS!

I GOTTA TELL YOU, BOYS, THIS IS TOO--

--IT'S TOO *EASY*.

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO *GO* NOW, PETEY.

BEAUTIFUL, BENEVOLENT SMILE. YOU NEVER REALLY TOLD HER, NOT *REALLY*.

I DON'T *WANT* TO. I WANT TO STAY HERE WITH *YOU*.

YOU CAN'T, SWEETIE. THIS ISN'T REAL. IT'S JUST THE WAY YOU *WANT* THINGS TO BE.

EXT

BUT *THAT'S* WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE-- IT'S WHERE YOU REALLY *ARE*.

TELL HER.

"I KNOW IT'S A BIG, CONVOLUTED MESS, PETEY-- BUT THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE *BECOME*."

BUT I DON'T *WANT* THAT. IT'S TOO MUCH.

I *LOST* YOU.

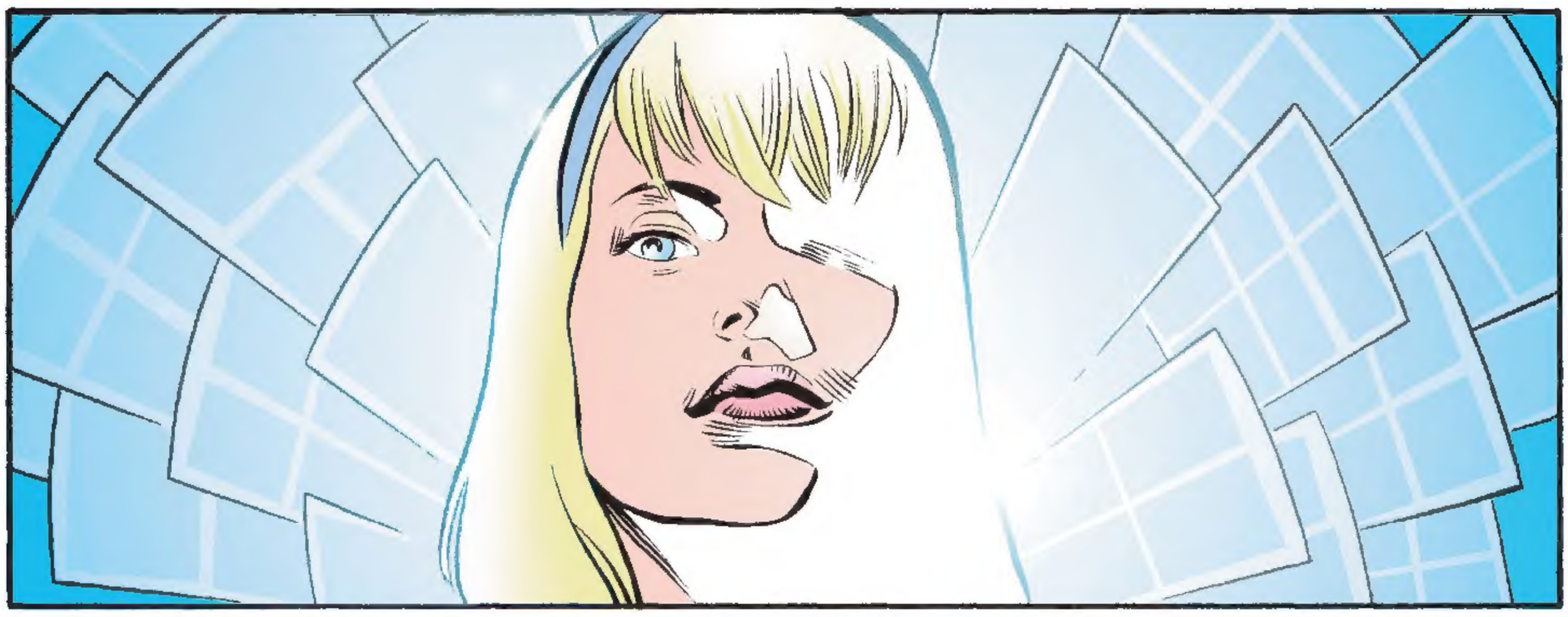
EXIT

BETTER TO HAVE LOVED AND *LOST*, SWEETPEA. BETTER TO HAVE LOVED AND LOST.

WHY CAN'T I STAY WITH *YOU*, GWEN?

YOU'RE *SLEEPING*.

YOU HAVE TO WAKE *UP* NOW...



"YOU HAVE TO WAKE *UP* NOW..."

"YOU HAVE TO WAKE *UP* NOW..."

WAKE UP, PETER. WAKE *UP*.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, DEAR? WERE YOU HAVING A *BAD DREAM--?*

NO.